

Santa Rosa Island Oral History Project
Santa Rosa Island Chapter
1993

Interview with Al Vail
March 11, 1993
at the office of Vail & Vickers
123 West Padre Street
Santa Barbara, California
by Carolyn Petry, Director
Santa Rosa Island Chapter

CP: Can you tell me how Vail & Vickers came to form a partnership?

AV: They had known one another from years ago in Arizona.

CP: Doing business?

AV: Yeah. Right. Exactly.

CP: What business?

AV: The cattle business. That was the only business my grandfather was ever in. He had a lot of different partners in Arizona, various partners, but someplace along the line he must have done something with Vickers and they ended up getting together out here to buy part of Santa Rosa Island.

CP: How did they hear about Santa Rosa?

AV: That I don't know. All I know is that my grandfather ran cattle on Santa Catalina Island in the 90's and he was involved there and evidently liked the idea of an island operation, and so when he heard about this, he formed a partnership with Vickers and it's been Vail & Vickers ever since, since 1902.

CP: What do you remember about your grandfather?

AV: Nothing. My grandfather passed away before I was born.

CP: Did you ever hear any stories about him?

AV: Oh yeah. I've heard a lot of stories about him. I guess he was quite a guy from what I was told and what I've read about him but I never, obviously, knew him personally.

CP: What was one story that you heard often?

AV: Oh I can't think of any particular story, except that he was quite a goer.

CP: A goer?

AV: Well that's ... you know, a very active man, did a lot of things?

CP: Other than cattle?

AV: Oh no. Primarily cattle.

CP: Which of the Vickers were involved back then?

AV: That was, I think it was JV Vickers, I think. He was in the same generation, obviously, as my grandfather was. They, in the Vickers family, they only raised, of that generation, they only raised girls, so the name got lost early, the Vickers name got lost early in the game. But, you know, you've got some people, Vickers descendants, who are now Crawford for example, or little Annie whatever - I can't think of her last name - I don't know that I know it.

CP: Eggers

AV: It's something else now.

CP: Eggers-Jones.

AV: So anyway the name, the Vickers name - got lost but there's still a number of Vickers running around, as is Ted Naftzger. He's a Vickers. But the name is gone.

CP: That leads into my next question. It seems, in my reading about the island and talking to people, that it's been mostly Vails who have been out there, managing it, working it.

AV: I jumped the gun. That's primarily because while the partnership has been Vail & Vickers, and maybe the Vickers were active years ago, but I don't know, but since I can remember it's always been Vail - one of the Vails - who's done the management. Vickers has never been in active management whatsoever, in my memory.

CP: And do you know why?

AV: Can't tell you why.

CP: Let's talk about your early visits to Santa Rosa. How often did you go there when you were a boy, a child?

AV: I can't remember how often I went there when I was a small child.

CP: Let's just say boyhood.

AV: All right. Well boyhood. You know, after I was old enough to go on my own, then I went there when we were shipping cattle, a lot of weekends, with the family, and then I got where I'd go over on vacations, and for example Easter and Christmas vacations, and I'd spend the summer over there on vacation.

CP: The whole summer?

AV: Yeah. Well primarily the whole summer.

CP: How would you get there?

AV: In those days primarily by boat. We did use an airplane occasionally but primarily by boat travel.

CP: Where would you go from?

AV: Either out of Santa Barbara, on the old *Onward* - that was the boat they used to keep on the island, or on the *Vaquero*, the original *Vaquero*, which ran out, most of the time ran out of Wilmington.

CP: Down in LA? Were you living down there?

AV: Yeah. When I was growing up the family lived in Los Angeles.

CP: What was the trip like from Wilmington to Santa Rosa?

AV: Well it was a lot different trip than it is from Santa Barbara to Santa Rosa, 'cause a good-good running was about a twelve hour run, but it could take a lot longer. I can recall one particular run when it took us somethin' like twenty-three hours, when we were in a lot of wind, and up and down, and lots of seasick people. Very unpleasant journey. But it was a lot more of a trip - an overnight trip is what it amounted to, whereas out of Santa Barbara you're only talking about more or less three hours on a boat.

CP: What would you do? That's a long time.

AV: Well you gotta eat and you gotta sleep, and that machine's on so I can't go into the pleasures of throwing up, and being sick. It was a twelve hour journey, is what it amounted to, an overnight, and there's not a lot to do on a boat at night except sack out.

CP: Were you seasick as a child?

AV: No I wasn't. I've been fortunate. I've been seasick twice in my life, once on the old *Vaquero* and once on the *Onward* and that's years ago.

CP: How would you feel on those trips when you could finally see the island?

AV: Well usually kind of a relief to get there and get your feet on dry land, but as far as being sick that didn't bother me. Normally, going out of Wilmington, we'd run at night so you'd hit the island about daylight.

CP: Who would you go out with?

AV: Well that was usually when the family was going out.

CP: Your mom went?

AV: Yeah. Oh yeah. Mother, father, brother, sister.

CP: When you got out to the island, what would you do during the days?

AV: Well, whatever kids ... you're talking about when you're kids... whatever kids do to get in trouble I guess, but no, we did quite a bit of riding, quite a bit of horseback riding, quite a place to fool around, explore the beach and what not, but the main reason for getting over there, or as far as I was concerned, was to ride horses.

CP: Did you have a favorite horse?

AV: Oh we all had a few favorites, yeah everybody... yeah I guess so.

CP: Can you remember yours?

AV: No. I'm trying to think of the names. There were a few but my memory's ...

CP: Who did you play with there?

AV: Well there was our own family, and then of course the Smith family was there, 'cause they were there permanently, so there was E.K. Smith and he had a brother who was later killed, he was a young guy, and his older brother, and then the daughter Frances, so we knew the Smiths.

CP: Can you remember any mischief you got into as boys?

AV: Not in particular. Nothing specific.

CP: No one stunt that stands out?

AV: No.

CP: Now, how about, say you're out there for the whole summer, and it's time to go home. Did you have any feeling about that?

AV: Oh yeah. I didn't like to go home because I enjoyed the island, and if I was there for the summer, that would... going home was to go back to school and comparing the two, I'd much rather be there than going to school. So, kinda, it was kinda dreaded going back to the mainland, actually.

CP: Yeah. I used to feel that way too, leaving Catalina.

AV: Well that's pretty easy to understand that, I'm sure.

CP: Absolutely. Tell me about high school. Where did you go to high school?

AV: Beverly Hills High School.

CP: Was it any different in high school - your feelings about the island? It's such a social time, for many kids.

AV: Well, I enjoyed, you know, enjoyed school all right, but I was always really interested in going to the island, so I don't know that I understand the question... run that by me again.

CP: In high school, how did you feel about going out to the island. Was it the same or was it different?

AV: Oh, I'd say it was the same. I always looked forward to goin' to the island.

CP: Did you ever take friends?

AV: Oh, yeah, we used to take friends.

CP: What about dating? Did you date much in high school?

AV: Oh, some, yeah.

CP: Did you ever take a girl out to the island?

AV: Not in high school.

CP: Can we talk about your dad? Can you tell me a bit about him?

AV: Well, I... what do you want to know?

CP: We could start with what he looked like.

AV: Oh. He was a pretty heavy man, a big man. I haven't got a picture here, so I can't show you. I had a good picture, but I lost it. He was a big man. He was pretty strict but also ... I have great memories of my father, and the last few years before he died I was very close to him.

CP: And he died when you were how old?

AV: 21.

CP: Pretty young.

AV: Yeah.

CP: What kind of dad was he?

AV: Well, as I say he was a good dad. Pretty strict, at times, but just a helluva good man as far as I was concerned. I mean, I was lucky enough to realize it at the time, before he passed away. I feel very fortunate that I had those feelings and realized it then, when he was still alive.

CP: Yeah. That is something.

AV: Particularly at that age. There's so many kids that don't realize what's goin' on until they're twenty five or thirty, and they miss the boat with their parents a lot of times.

CP: That sure is true.

AV: But as far as all, I look back and see I was very fond of my father. I had a very happy childhood, if you want to call it childhood, or growing up in my family. It was great.

CP: How'd you get along with your dad?

AV: I got along great. Great.

CP: What sorts of things would you do together out on the island?

AV: Well it'd be mostly - when we went over there years ago, there were no vehicles over there, except when Standard Oil was there in the thirties, - so mostly, as far as getting around anyplace, it was horseback.

CP: Did he teach you to ride?

AV: Oh...yeah....well you kinda grow up learning how to ride, in a way, if you know what I mean. I mean he showed us kinda how...what we should do, but then it's a matter of practice and really doing it to really learn how. But we had

ample ... let's put it this way, he made ample opportunity for us to learn how to ride. And of course my Uncle Ed made a lot of trips to the island and he was very instrumental in helping us kids learn how to ride. He probably, he took us riding more than dad did, when he was there.

CP: And he went out quite a bit, even when you were younger?

AV: Yeah. Right. Right.

CP: Oh. I see. He was your dad's brother, right?

AV: Right. Younger brother.

CP: How would he get out there?

AV: Well he'd go on the boat with us.

CP: Where was he living?

AV: Right at that time, he lived in Pasadena, if I recall... yeah he lived in Pasadena or that area and then later on he was up in the Santa Maria area, but at that time he was out in the southland. He came out of the southland.

CP: Who was the manager at that time, when you were growing up?

AV: When I was growing up, it was my father.

CP: I see. So Uncle Ed was out there as...

AV: Well he was active in the cattle business too, but the general manager was my father.

CP: What sort of ranch manager was your dad?

AV: I don't know how to answer that question, other than he was, as far as I'm concerned, a pretty good manager. But, I don't ... is that the answer you wanted?

CP: Oh, I just want to know if you have any memories of maybe,...what the cowboys thought of him... if he was liked, not liked, feared?

AV: Can't tell you. You know, if he wasn't liked, it wouldn't have been passed on to me, from a cowpuncher. You know what I'm saying. I think he was probably feared to a certain extent.

CP: Was he formal? How was he as a manager?

AV: Pretty formal. Pretty formal. In those days, people were much more formal, if you recall.

CP: I don't. That's why I'm asking. I'm wondering how that showed itself. You're saying he was formal and I'm wondering what did he do to make people be respectful.

AV: I really can't help you on that. But things were more formal in those days,. For example, Smitty who we refer to, was C. W. Smith, and E. K.'s father ... he was very particular that we asked him if it was alright if we called him Smitty, rather than Mr. Smith. That was just a matter of manners with kids. But that was more a sign of the times, than anything else. People were more formal.

CP: How did your dad dress, when he was out there?

AV: He dressed in country clothes, levis.

CP: The same as the cowboys?

AV: Yeah, pretty much so. Yeah, there was no formal operation going on over there.

CP: I'm wondering ... was your dad, was he any different when he was off the island rather than when he was on the island, that you can remember?

AV: Don't think he was. Other than I know he relaxed, he enjoyed the island I know. He was a lot happier there than sitting in an office.

CP: What did he do on the mainland?

AV: Well, just everything that goes in, just like we work here in the office, whatever, what pertains to the island. Of course at one time he ran the whole Vail company which were some other ranches, and then later on he just ran the island. What he did... whatever came up is what he did.

CP: What office was he working out of in those days?

AV: At that time, we had an office in Los Angeles. The Vail Company office. Vail & Vickers never had an office together until we moved up here.

CP: How do you think your dad felt about Santa Rosa?

AV: He liked it very much. I know that.

CP: You know. He told you?

AV: Yeah. Well anybody in my family that's been connected with it has always liked it. I don't know how you wouldn't like it.

CP: Got me.

AV: OK.

CP: What did he teach you about the island. Or tell you?

AV: I really don't know how to tell that. I'm trying to think back. Primarily, he taught us, I guess he taught more by example, by what we observed than by anything else, if you know what I'm saying.

CP: And what did his example...

AV: Well as far as learning something, how the ranch operated.

CP: What about your mom?

AV: She used to go over there. I don't think she was all that thrilled... enjoyed the island as much as he did, but she used to enjoy going over with the family and she'd take some friends over.

CP: Women friends?

AV: Yeah.

CP: What would they do?

AV: Well as a matter of fact, they'd get around a little, but mostly they'd get over there and play bridge... I remember that, they were a bunch of bridge hounds.

CP: How'd you get along with your mom?

AV: Got along real good. As I said, my childhood growing up, up to and including until both of 'em passed away and then I was a grown man when my mother passed away and my dad too, but the whole relationship with my mother and father was excellent. And I feel very fortunate that I look back, and I'm very happy that it was.

CP: And such a special place, too. What about your brother. How did you and Russ get along?

AV: We got along. We got along good . Of course we fought like hell, just like all brothers do growing up, so you know, we got along.

CP: How'd you get along with Maggie?

AV: Fine.

CP: Did you get along with Russ any different, better or worse, than Maggie?

AV: I don't think...I can't think of any difference.

CP: Really. Well, I'm a twin so I'm curious. We never had any other siblings.

AV: Yeah. Well I don't know. I don't know if you can figure any difference, to tell you the truth. Maybe two brothers would get along in a different fashion than a brother and sister, but there was no, as I recall, there was no animosity amongst any of us. I think they'll tell you the same thing - that it was a very happy environment that we grew up in, and we were damn fortunate for it.

CP: I've heard that, certainly from your sister. I haven't had a chance to talk to Russ yet, but certainly your sister echoes that sentiment.

AV: Yeah. Well I was say I've never really talked to them, but I think all three of us kids would say that the whole process of growing up, we did it in a happy family.

CP: She said that you just had a lot of fun, especially out on the island.

AV: Yeah, right. Well that was the place where we enjoyed. After all, it was a lot more fun over there doing the things we did than going to school.

CP: Yeah. Did your parents treat you and Russ in any special way because you were twins?

AV: I don't think so. No, I think the only thing they tried to do was try and see that everything -- that we were treated as equally as they could.

CP: You and Russ, or all three of you?

AV: Well all three of us, but I mean particularly Russ and I because we were right in the same age, obviously, so I know they made a strange effort to try and be equal with us, and I think they did a good job.

CP: My parents did that until we were twenty five.

AV: Yeah, okay. Well, if my parents had lived longer they probably would still be doing it, but they did that until we grew up and went - kinda more or less left the nest.

CP: When you were out on the island for a week or weekend or the summer, what did you do in the evenings. What were your evenings like?

AV: I don't remember too much about the evenings, to tell you the truth.

CP: Well, let's take some time and think back. Did you have tv, a radio?

AV: No, there was no tv. Well, now I gotta think back. I can remember kinda the big social out ... a lot of times we'd go down and listen to the radio. Old man Smith - that's EK's father - he was kind of a short wave nut, but he had a helluva good radio and we usually would - it was kind of a tradition that we'd listen to at that time Amos & Andy and Lome (?) and Abner. Now you probably would never heard of either, you heard of Amos & Andy maybe.

CP: Actually, there's a movie out name with that title. I don't know if it's the same...

AV: Those were two radio shows that came on shortly after dinner and that was kind of mandatory that we listen to those. And then of course sit around and maybe tell a ghost story or various things. But, if you're running around all day long, you're not gonna do a lot at night,. You're gonna hit the sack at night.

CP: Did your mom cook dinners every night?

AV: Both. But we probably ate more down at the main bunkhouse than we ate above, at the guest... at the family house. We probably ate more meals down below at the bunkhouse, particularly for dinner.

CP: And who cooked?

AV: Well that was whoever was cookin' for the crew that was cooking. Whoever was the ranch cook at that time would be cooking.

CP: So, who would you eat with?

AV: Family.

CP: Just the family?

AV: No, you'd go down and eat with the whole crew.

CP: Oh, everybody.

AV: Yeah, right. Right.

CP: Did people talk amongst themselves, or.... I'm trying to get a feel for what that was like... or did you pretty much talk within your family at dinner?

AV: Oh. I don't remember. All I know is there's a couple of big long tables there in the bunkhouse and everybody would go in there and eat. I guess sometimes if there was too many guests, then I guess they'd set two tables sometimes. You know what I'm saying? I'm not sure I remember too well on that. But, no, everybody was very sociable. You know, I mean as far as our family or friends and talking to any of the ranch crew -- it was a very friendly atmosphere. That's what you're asking, isn't it?

CP: Yeah. I'm just trying to get a feel for what it was like. That's - one of the purposes of oral history is to - so I can go back there, and see what it was like, and I'm getting a little picture.

AV: Well, yeah. No, no the people that went over as guests, say of our family, or even like Russ & I would have some friends, maybe each have a pal that we'd take to the island, they would be acquainted with the regular crews, you know, so it was a very - I gotta say it was a very friendly atmosphere, at the dinner table or wherever.

CP: What time did you go to bed usually, those nights?

AV: Usually pretty damned early.

CP: I bet. And what time did you get up?

AV: Well, normal gettin' up time on a ranch is sunup.

CP: Sounds wonderful. What experiences did you have as a child with religion?

AV: With what?

CP: With religion. Did you have any experiences with religions, churches, or anything like that?

AV: Very little. My family, particularly my mother, pushed us to Sunday School until we, ... until she got tired of pushing, and that religion never took with me nor did it take with Russ, I'm sure.

CP: Do you remember what type church she was pushing?

AV: Well, we went to Episcopal church at one time. When we were kids, little kids, they took us to Sunday school all the time and that's when we were little, and then later on I remember Russ and I we went to a community church 'cause we were kinda involved with some other kids our age in athletics and what not so we went to Sunday school. But as far as getting into that religion, organized religion, the heavy bit, we never did.

CP: Wasn't for you.

AV: No. No, I mean it never was and never ... I'm not interested in that religion bit today.

CP: I'd like to talk about C. W. Smith. Can you tell me a little bit about him?

AV: Well, he was the foreman on Santa Rosa Island when we were growing up, going over to the island. And, he went to work for my grandfather, when my grandfather leased Catalina Island, and he was a young man then, but that's years and years ago, that was sometime in the 1890's, early 1890's, and he worked for my grandfather there, 'cause he actually was a seafaring man up to then, then he worked for my grandfather, and my grandfather took him back to the Empire Ranch in Arizona and made a cowpuncher out of him. And so he was in Arizona for a number of years working for my grandfather - as a matter of fact he got, he acquired a little ranch of his own, and had it for several years, and then the foreman at that time on Santa Rosa Island, whose name was Frank Pepper, his wife committed suicide over there...and that kinda blew him outta the box and he couldn't stay there and so they got C. W. Smith to come out to take care of things, because he was a good cowpuncher and he knew the ocean, and I remember Smitty, as we called him, told me they asked him to come up and he said well I'll come up for a year, and help you boys out and then I want to go back to my place in Arizona. So he came up for the year and stayed about thirty years, and that's where he raised his family - on Santa Rosa Island. And E. K. was born on Santa Rosa Island, that's one of the... there's two boys, Charlie and E. K. , Charlie's the second one, and a girl, Francis. Now EK was born on Santa Rosa Island and I don't know, I'd have to ask him, whether the other two kids were born there or not. But they were raised on Santa Rosa Island. But, I don't know... I guess that's good enough.

CP: How did you feel about C.W.?

AV: Well, at one time I was scared to death of the old man ... or you know, kinda leery of him. But he was a great guy, a great guy. I guess I had to get a little older to realize what a good guy, what a great guy he was and what a sense of humor he had. He had a very dry sense of humor. But he was a helluva good man, is what it amounted to. And then, I'm very proud of the fact that they, that our friendship, like with EK goes back... I remember EK since before I can remember knowing him, if you know what I mean. There aren't many people that you know forever.

CP: No. I think that's great.

AV: ... anyone you didn't know... you know what I mean? *(gap where tape was*

turned over)

CP: Except for maybe your twin.

AV: Yeah. Probably your twin sister.

CP: I'd like to talk a little more about Smitty. I want to ask you if you have any sense of how the cowboys felt about him? What kind of a, you know, ranch...

AV: ... Oh, he was from the old school, and I'll tell you, he was a pretty tough old man, and you know, I don't know how well they liked him. I can guarantee you they respected him, but I don't think he could have run for a popularity contest with some of the crew and won any **applause** (*word hard to make out - this is a guess*), but as I say he was tough and they respected him.

CP: What did he wear? Did he wear cowboy clothes?

AV: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

CP: Do you have any stories about him you'd like to share with me?

AV: All I know was that he was a ... somebody should have written a story about him because when he was a young kid he took off and he was a cabin boy, and I don't know whether he went around the world, but he went and saw a lot of places, and as I say, he was originally a seafaring man, or boy, well he was a mature young man when he went to work for my grandfather. He'd been around a lot of places when he picked up with my grandfather, as a seafaring man, ...then he went to work ... then they made a cowpuncher out of him in Arizona, and as I said, he was there for a long time. I could probably come up with a story, but you hit me, boom, and I can't think of anything.

CP: Any of this stuff...what's going to happen is that I'm going to, not now, but when we're all done with the interviews, I'm going to get it all typed up and you'll have a chance to look at it and say, gosh, I'd like to tell a story about CW and I can come back and we can do that. So don't worry.

Do you have any knowledge of what he would do in his spare time, his leisure time on the island?

AV: Well, there wasn't all that much leisure time, and of course, he was kind of a radio nut. He used to, years ago, play around with a short wave radio and fancy equipment that he would get to listen to Japan and all over the damn country which was kind of a hobby, and he did quite a bit, like all those boys at that time, he did quite a bit of leather work, as I recall. He was good, he could make good leather work. Riattas, such and so forth and so on.

CP: A what?

AV: Riatta.

CP: What's that?

AV: Well, it's a - a riatta's a riatta. It's a rawhide rope that, hold it and I'll show you. Here's a riatta.

CP: Oh. Wow. Is this one handmade?

AV: Yeah. See. They make 'em out of ... you have to prepare ... this is out of a cowhide and they draw these... they make the strings - there's a lot of work to prepare those strings and then they braid 'em.

CP: Wow. And what are they used for?

AV: Well, just like a rope, for a lasso rope.

CP: So they're strong.

AV: Well, yeah. But you gotta handle 'em right.

CP: How's right?

AV: Well I mean you can't just put a real hard, too hard a pull, on 'em.

CP: So it's kind of an art?

AV: You bet it is. You don't find many good ... when my brother and I were born he made two ropes that he gave to my father for us boys, and I still have one of the ropes, and it's a real fine, it's real fine workmanship.

CP: That's lovely.

AV: Well that's a few years, see, I'm seventy one so...as I say I still have one of the riattas. But that's what a riatta is.

CP: Is there anyone out on the island who makes these still?

AV: Yeah. Right now a couple of boys do. Jesus Bracamontes is out there. He does good riatta work, good rawhide work. And, there's a couple of the boys who do some, but Jesus is the best one out there. I think he got interviewed by Marla, didn't he?

CP: Yes, but I don't know if there's anything about riattas in there, and these are wonderful.

AV: Well, that would come up in the question you asked me, what would you do in your spare time? That's what.

CP: That's great. Do you think Russ still has his?

AV: No, because I ended up with both of 'em someplace along the line and one of 'em got torn up and then the other one is still - I think there's a piece of one and the other one is intact, in good shape. I'll have to look and see whether - I'm sure I still got it, still have one. They never got used. They were too good a piece of workmanship, so they never got used.

CP: But you do know how to use them?

AV: Well, just fair.

CP: Who is good with them these days?

AV: Well, a real good cowpuncher that knows how to rope. There's a few of us still who can do it.

CP: Anybody out on the island?

AV: Well we don't do much roping out on the island. That's one reason I never turned into too good a roper, because most of those, we try to keep those cattle gentle. We don't run 'em. If they have to be docked, we normally walk them in and put them in a chute,

CP: Oh, I see. Now, we're still in your childhood, young adulthood. Who else worked out there on the island when you were young who stands out in your memory?

AV: Like, what era?

CP: Let's say high school, and college.

AV: Well, Smitty of course was the dominant person that I can remember who was there, but there were other cowpunchers and other people. I can think of Joe Lopez as being one of them, in fact his kids were raised over there with EK. They went to school with EK's kids.

CP: What did he do?

AV: He was just a cowpuncher. And, I mean there were a number of different cowpunchers over there that I can think of.

CP: Do you have much memory of what they were like?

AV: Well, a cowpuncher's pretty much a cowpuncher. I don't understand your question too well.

CP: Oh, that's probably my fault. I'm just trying to...

AV: Learn something...

CP: Learn something about the people who were out there, what they were like. It seems to me that it takes a special personality to live out on an island and be a cowpuncher.

AV: Well it does. You're right there. Very definitely. There's a lot of people that can't handle the isolation. Of course we don't, ... the isolation's nothing today to what it was years ago. But, there's still people who live in the country but they got their pickup and they can run to town when they want to and Santa Rosa Island -- you're not geared that way. There's more isolation and you don't have a chance to run to town whenever you feel like it. And there's a lot of people who just can't handle that so it does, you're right, it does take kind of a special type of person. There's a lot of country people, you know, oriented in the country, that can't handle the island.

CP: Yeah. I believe. Okay. Let's move up to college, and talk a little bit about that time. Is that all right -- you're not too tired?

AV: Well, I don't have an exemplary record in college. Well. All right. I went to UCLA and then I spent one semester up at Davis and then back to UCLA, and then the war came along and disrupted my college education, or it didn't disrupt it ... I didn't get called into the service because I was classified as a 4F, which means I medically wasn't any good. I had a bad leg, and asthma too. But there was not much percentage in stayin' in school when everybody else was gone, so I started workin' on the island at that time, and been pretty damn ... been associated with it ever since.

CP: When you were in college you, what were you studying?

AV: I majored in, ... my major was business administration and as I say, I did six months at Davis, or one semester, in animal husbandry, and then I came back to UCLA and then I went to work full time on the island.

CP: Great. When you were in college, what did you think you would be doing after college, before the war came, and all of that.

AV: Oh, I was always interested in agriculture and ranching. And, I even looked forward to doin' something on the island.

CP: That's what I thought. How often did you go out to the island when you were in college?

AV: Probably not as frequent as I used to when I was in high school, but I used to go over there in the summers, and vacations, the lengthy vacations, like Easter Break, or Thanksgiving and Christmas. I'd go over then. Yeah. Probably not as often on strictly the weekend deal, but still went over on the lengthier vacations.

CP: How were you getting out there at this point?

AV: Boat still, but by that time that came along we had more airplane travel then.

CP: Tell me what you'd do in college - you were a little older now - how was it when you were out on the island ? What did you do?

AV: Same thing. Except I worked more with the crew then. I was old enough then to do a days work, so I'd work primarily with the crew with whatever was goin' on. And most of the activity on the island is horseback.

CP: So I gather.

AV: Yeah, but in those days, we didn't have any rolling stock at all in those days.

CP: Any, pardon?

AV: We didn't have any rolling stock. Mainly, pickups or anything. It was all horseback.

CP: A lot of work.

AV: Yeah. Well, it'd be kind of a different, a different deal than it is today.

CP: You were in college. You didn't get to go out there as much. What was it like to be away for longer stretches of time?

AV: Oh, no problem.

CP: Were you busy? Was that the reason you didn't go out there as much?

AV: Probably a few more social activities in college. That might have had something to do with it.

CP: Okay. I think we'll leave that topic and move on to the death of your dad. Can you tell me about his death?

AV: Well, he passed away from a heart attack and he died in 1943.

CP: And where was he when this happened?

AV: He was up with my uncle in Santa Maria, cause my uncle had a, was runnin' the old Jesus, had the Jesus Maria Ranch which he had for a long time. He was up there with my uncle, and he passed away up there.

CP: What was the effect on your family?

AV: Can't tell you that. You know, I don't know how to answer that question, cause the death of somebody in the family, particularly if it's a mother or a father is pretty devastating on the ... on everybody that's left.

CP: Well, you just told me. Yeah, it is. Who took over the island then?

AV: Well then my Uncle Ed, Ed Vail took over management of the island.

CP: And how was that decided?

AV: Well it was decided by the Vail Company and also I'm sure it was... I don't know but I'm sure it had to be okayed by the Vickers ? court (part) ? at that time, but he was kinda the logical person to take it over.

CP: Because?

AV: Well he was the logical person because he knew more about the island, than anybody. He'd worked there as a young man, and spent a lot of time there, and even though he had a lease on the Jesus Maria, or a part of it, he was better qualified to run the island than anybody else - the Jesus Maria being the old - The Jesus Maria Ranch is what is now Vandenberg. It was Camp Cook. It was Jesus Maria, then Uncle Sam took it over and they used it for ... actually they trained mostly the tanks there and they called it Camp Cook and then later on they changed the name to Vandenberg.

CP: That's an interesting bit of history, isn't it? How did you feel about Uncle Ed

taking over?

AV: Oh, just fine, cause Uncle Ed was always, I always, ... he was very popular with everybody, Uncle Ed was. And all us kids loved him, 'cause we always had a lot of fun with him, but I was a grown man then, twenty one, sure I was twenty one, twenty two. But, no, I was pleased, obviously pleased.

CP: What about you? Did you want to be manager?

AV: Well, someday, but I was too young at that time to take on the responsibility.

CP: Okay. We're going to talk about Uncle Ed next time, but I would like to sort of shift gears right now and talk a little bit about some of the critters that are out there - pigs, deer and elk specifically. First of all, the pigs. Can you tell me how they came to get out there?

AV: No, except I'm sure that they came to be there cause the early settlers took 'em over and I'm, there was some talk, you know, that they were put there for food supply for boats that passed by. But I'm sure that the story on the hogs were that they just went out there and they were tame hogs and a few of 'em got loose and went wild and that's why they, from the early settlers - that was the original people that took 'em over.

CP: So they were there long before 1902, is that what you're saying?

AV: Yeah. Right.

CP: I heard there's some connection between the pigs there and the pigs on Catalina. Can you tell me about that?

AV: Well. Yeah. The connection there is the fact that they wanted some hogs on Catalina and my dad made a trade with the people on Catalina Island. We traded some hogs for some quail, so they caught some hogs and - in fact, I helped catch 'em as a kid. This is way back in the early 30's and they caught a bunch of hogs and took 'em down on the old *Vaquero* and gave them the hogs and in turn they got some quail off Catalina Island.

CP: What did you want the quail for?

AV: Just for a bird, to turn loose.